



Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission

March 6, 2019

The Honorable Joe Taylor
Superintendent, Washington County Public Schools
652 Third Street
Chipley, FL 32428

Dear Superintendent Taylor:

At the last meeting of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission (Commission), the Commission voted unanimously to recommend that all school districts across Florida maximize the use of the school Guardian Program authorized under Florida law. I am writing on behalf of the Commission to encourage you and your school district to fully implement the Guardian Program and maximize school safety in your district.

Florida law currently requires that there be at least one Safe School Officer on every elementary, middle, high, and charter school campus in Florida. This does not mean that a Safe School Officer simply be “assigned” to the school; this means there needs to be an armed Safe School Officer on campus at all times when school is in session. A Safe School Officer is either a police officer, deputy sheriff, or a Guardian. A Guardian is specifically defined under Florida law as anyone employed by a school/school district, other than someone who is predominately a classroom teacher (with certain exceptions).

Several districts and charter schools across Florida have implemented the Guardian Program by hiring designated, full-time Guardians. They are generally uniformed personnel who perform solely as Guardians and have no other school responsibilities. Despite being authorized under current law, only a few districts permit school personnel, such as principals, coaches, or others, to act as Guardians in addition to their ‘regular’ duties.

This self-imposed limitation by the school districts does not maximize school safety as allowed by current law. Simply having one armed Safe School Officer on a campus is insufficient in most cases, especially when the law permits other qualified and willing school personnel to be voluntarily armed as a collateral duty to stop a threat that may occur at school.

On February 13, 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis issued an Executive Order permitting a renewed and extended application period for Guardian funding. This is a second opportunity to take advantage of the \$67 million in Guardian training funds provided for in SB7026. The applications under this extension are due to the Department of Education, through the sheriff of your county, by April 1, 2019, and the funds may be expended through September 13, 2019.

IN MEMORY OF:

Alyssa Alhadeff

Scott Beigel

Martin Duque Anguiano

Nicholas Dworet

Aaron Feis

Jaime Guttenberg

Christopher Hixon

Luke Hoyer

Cara Loughran

Gina Montalto

Joaquin Oliver

Alaina Petty

Meadow Pollack

Helena Ramsay

Alexander Schachter

Carmen Schentrup

Peter Wang



Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission

Seconds matter when stopping an active shooter and the Commission urges you to maximize the authority you have under current Florida law to enhance school safety by permitting additional qualified and willing personnel to be voluntarily armed to protect our children from harm.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri
Commission Chair

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Aaron Feis

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